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Rumblings From Deep Under Ground

SPIES ARE BURROWING Animals. The CIA once dug a tunnel under East Berlin to tap the opposition's telephone line. The agency even dug a quarter-mile tunnel under its own property in Langley to provide a secret entrance to the complex. At the agency, "going underground" is more than a metaphor," writes Aaron Latham in his new, dazzling novel, "Orchids for Mother."

And there's a hot big CIA story in the works at CBS with people leaking stuff about it all over the place. At the moment, no one knows whether the material will appear on "60 Minutes," "Who's Who," or run as an hour documentary special, but it will be seen this month. Dan Rather has written and narrated the program, to be called "Inside the CIA," with David Buksbaum producing.

Rather suspects the leaks about the program have to do with competitors who tried desperately to get the show for themselves. Says Dan, "It's been a vicious struggle and we won. We don't always win." It took three years to secure permission for the program and it will surely be a milestone in its consideration of director Stansfield Turner and the supersecret agency.

No matter the name under which CBS presents the footage, it will be the first time the CIA has ever let a camera into its buildings — a very big first for CBS television. The CIA had the right of "security review" of the raw film and then only pictorially, not editorially. The single concession to censorship was that the CIA might cut out persons in the footage if any "spy" were accidentally photographed. Not a single word of "Inside the CIA" will be cut.

The CIA is really loosening up. The agency recently replaced its misleading directional signs in Virginia to simple ones reading "The CIA." The agency also has granted access to Time magazine.